

Avila Examiner

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Avila College

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Season Reflects Times at Avila

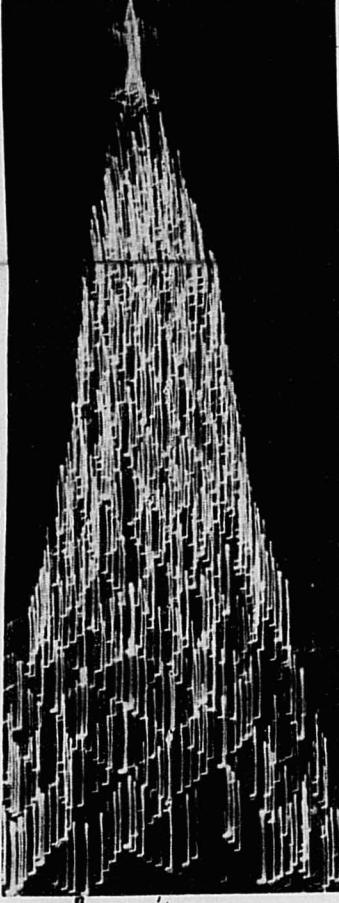
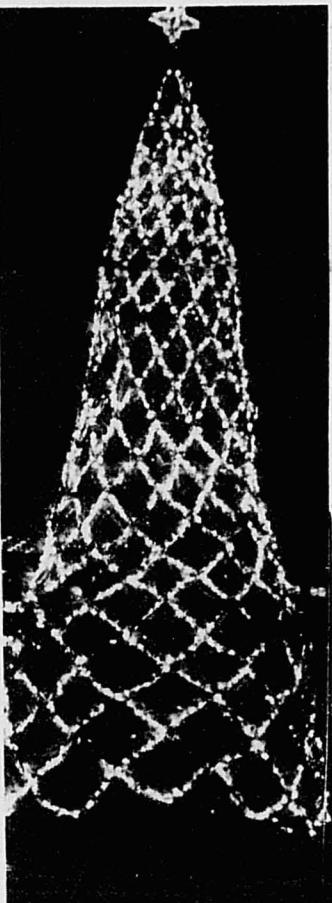
"For everything there is a season

and a time for every matter under heaven:"

the holiday season is a time for
Learning about the people around you
Giving a part of yourself
A time for Remembering God
Rejoicing in His miracles, old and new
Sharing thoughts and feelings
A time for Re-dedicating yourself to God
And to hard work
And finally
A time for Celebrating with Him for
"He has made everything beautiful in its time."

People are preparing for Christmas at Avila and all over Kansas City. Top Left: Shoppers spend their time, energy and money searching for the perfect gift. Top Right: A small girl visits Santa to convey her list of toy requests. Center pictures: The mayor's Christmas tree brightens the scene at Crown Center

Bottom pictures: Lights illuminate the Plaza, A Kansas City tradition for many years.



A Time for Learning about People

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'Christmas Carol'

Holiday Ghosts Haunt Campus

By Kim Vilord

Scrooge will be at Avila on December 10 and 11. An adaptation of Charles Dickens' play, "A Christmas Carol," is theatre major Carol Scortino's, senior project. Carol has been working on the direction as well as the set design since November of 1976.

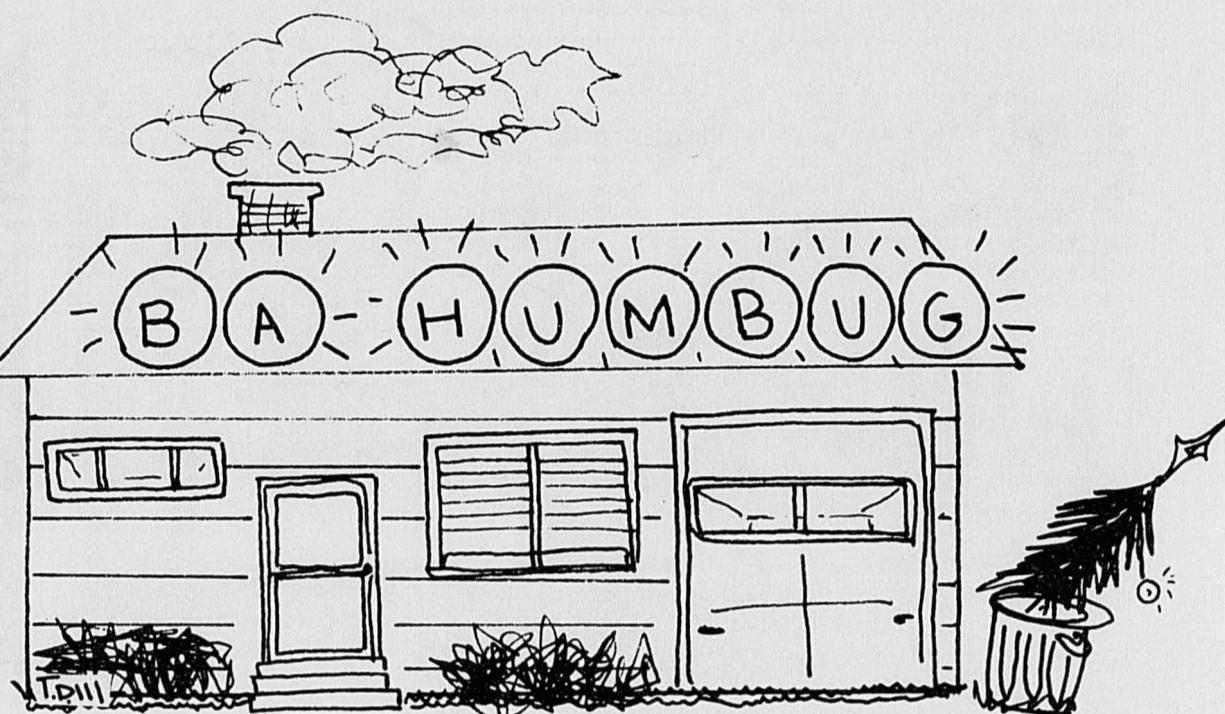
The performances will be in Goppert Theatre on December 10 at 2 and 8 p.m. and December 11 at 2 and 4 p.m. The play includes the original characters: Ebenezer Scrooge, played by junior Martin Merritt and the four ghosts. The cast consists of fourteen actors — seven men and seven women.

Costumes are more colorful and modern than those of the original play versions. Along with the costumes color variety, they will be versatile. This allows each character to portray at least three characters, just by reversing one article of clothing.

All the scenery changes will be versatile. This allows each character to portray at least three characters, just by reversing one article of clothing.

All the scenery changes will be done by the actors in front of the audience, quickly and effectively, making the play time one hour and ten minutes.

Because "A Christmas Carol" is a children's theatre production, Santa Claus will finalize the show with treats for all children.



Seniors Art Majors present show of their works as a part of their requirements for graduation.

Seniors Display Art Work

December 5, 6, 7, and 8 are the dates Linda Suptic will display her works of fibre and ceramics.

The senior art show is a series of art exhibits done by graduating students. For those seniors graduating in January, the first series began on November 28 for everyone's viewing enjoyment. On November 28, 29, and 30, Antonia Lozano had on display paintings and drawings of commercial art. Lozano also had an opening night and reception on November 29 at 7:30 p.m. This was an invitational reception for friends and relatives to view and admire Lozano's work.

Senior art majors with a B average are required to do the art show as part of graduation credit. The work chosen for display must be approved by the advisors teaching the class. Slides of the shows are also taken and kept on record for future art department reference.

For the senior art majors graduation in May, exhibits will be held later this Spring.

Faculty Drops Pre-registration

To replace spring pre-registration, the faculty will have an advisement day. A program enabling students to talk and receive counseling from their advisors. It will allow them to get a better outlook on class offerings, as well as inform each about his or her future curriculum requirements.

It has been voted on by Dean Richard Scott and the faculty/staff to withdraw spring registration from Avila's program. Pre-registration for fall classes will not change.

In the past, spring pre-registration has not been as effective as fall pre-registration because spring classes come so much later than pre-registration. Students, therefore, change a lot of classes before the new semester begins. This of course defeats the purpose behind pre-registration.

Food Service Yields Slim Profits

by Jeanne Pearson

The food service this year is set up through Gladieux Food Services Inc. The contract between Avila and Gladieux calls for the food service to make a 1.1% profit.

The Gladieux Food Service consists of managing the cafeteria, snack bar and a catering service.

The cafeteria provides three meals a day, seven days a week for resident students, commuters who wish to eat in the cafeteria and the Sisters.

Cafeteria menus run in a four week cycle, which started a few weeks ago. The first part of the semester the meals were prepared on a weekly basis.

Barb Duff, Director of Housing, approves each menu. The menu is set up so that within a week there are no meals repeated. A college Food Service committee was formed recently and will be getting together in the future to help Barb select a menu. There are four members on the committee: Laura Bellas, Mary Beth Mudd, Richard Thompson, and Grace La Martina.

These students on the committee live in the dorm. They will review the menu and get feedback from resident students. Special Event programs will be originated from the committee which will occur once a month, such as one or two dinner theaters and special Holiday dinners.

The menu consists of 28 different dinners and lunches with two entrees making a subtotal of 56 dinners and lunches. Therefore, this makes a total of 112 different menus. The Food Service tries not to repeat the menu with the exception of steak and shrimp night which are repeated once a week. They may, for example, have roast beef twice a month, on one occasion it will be served with chicken and on another with stuffed green peppers. The only meal stu-

dents are not allowed seconds is the steak and shrimp. The reason for this is that the expense would be too great.

The contract between Avila and Gladieux calls for 2 main dishes, at lunch and dinner, with one of them being solid meat, for example pork chops or hamburger with a casserole.

There is a salad bar that consists of 5 different salads with a relish dish and tossed salad. New this year is an ice cream chest which is in use during meal time. Other entrees are soup at lunch and dinner and a variety of vegetables. At breakfast eggs, potatoes, pancakes, fruit, cereal, toast and danishes are served. Once a month steak and eggs are served.

The quality of the food is determined by the cost that the school can afford. There are set standards in categories that have to be top rating, beef for example has to be top quality choice and the poultry USDA grade A.

Gladieux has a second function, the snack bar. It offers the opportunity for commuters to eat on campus, if they don't wish to eat in the cafeteria. The snack bar was remodeled this year and the menu was expanded from the previous years. New machines for drinks were installed. The use of the snack bar has grown as hoped but as the year progresses the goal is to have more students utilizing the facility.

The third service offered is catering: serving the special functions at the school.

For resident students who are unable to make dinner due to school functions there is a sack lunch program. There is additional quality and more choices and options than in the past years. Items are flex-

ible. If one wants diet food there are choices, if not they offer a good quality of sandwiches, snacks, desserts and beverages. With this program there has been some problems. Students not getting what they ordered or not picking them up. Overall the program is better than in the past.

The money needed to implement these programs comes from a variety of areas. From resident board cost comes 65.2%, snack bar 17.8%, catering events 12.8%, 3% from the cash sales at the meals and 1.2% from the sisters. A point concerning the catering. In the past resident students have become upset by the inconveniences of the catering in the cafeteria during meals, one should take note that it pays for 12.8% of the total cost of the operation.

The expenses of the food service are 49.5% which goes toward the cost of food. Labor cost is 32.8%, direct cost such as paper products is 7.5%. The remainder is for Gladieux's profit, equipment depreciation, and commission for Gladieux and Avila.

Scissors Produce Fund Increase

Avila's first annual Cut-A-Thon took place Sun., Nov. 6, 1977 at Heads Together on 209 Westport Road. Jim Fassone, owner of Heads Together, along with Dennis, Cathy, Cindy and Harvey, styled and cut heads of hair from 12 noon to 9 p.m. Forty-nine tickets were sold for the Cut-A-thon bringing in a profit of \$735 for Avila's new library. The Student Library Fund Drive would like to thank all those who participated in the Cut-A-thon and especially Heads Together for their time and effort to make the Cut-A-thon a success.

Fire Department Bans Live Christmas Trees On Avila Campus

By Mary Prigel

Around Avila, it's beginning to look like the holiday season. Mistletoe over office doors, cafeteria workers planning turkey dinners, and Santa Claus visiting classrooms are all a part of this special time at Avila. However, there is one traditional element of an Avila Christmas that is absent this year. That is a live Christmas tree.

Fire Department authorities have notified Avila of an ordinance that bans Christmas trees from public and institutional occupancies. In effect since 1973, sections 14.137 and 14.437 of the fire code prohibit highly flammable material, especially materials containing pitch and resin, inside mercantile and institutional buildings. Exceptions to the ordinance are only made if the substance is flame-proofed.

The traditional live Christmas tree, of course, contains large amounts of pitch and resin. And, according to Fire Chief Veodist Luster of the prevention division, Underwriters Laboratories have pronounced Christmas trees unable to be flame-proofed.

"I took the time to write to Underwriters Laboratories, a testing authority that we use, and find out whether or not a live Christmas tree could in fact be made fire resistive," Fire Chief Luster explained. "Their answer was that it could not. A live Christmas tree contains combustible and highly flammable materials in pitch and resin and cannot be neutralized so that the beauty of the tree can be maintained."

Violation of the ordinance can be deemed a misdemeanor. Fines range from \$50 to \$200, and imprisonment can also be declared. And, according to a spokesperson for the fire prevention division, the ordinance has been enforced since 1973.

"Enforcement efforts have involved fire department officials actually going into the schools and dragging out live trees, ornaments and all. So, obviously we have had some infringements and many complaints about the ordinance."

However, even though the ordinance has been in effect since 1973, according to Tom Lease, Director of Student Life this is the first year Avila has been notified of the situation.

Upon receiving notification of the ordinance, Tom wrote Chief Luster a letter explaining the need for live Christmas trees at Avila.

"A primary task of the college staff here at Avila is to assist students in creating a warm, homelike environment within the residence halls. . . A traditional part of the programming involving this environment is the Christmas celebration, which takes place for the residents prior to their departure for Christmas break. The use of live Christmas trees on those floors wishing to create that environment has been a rewarding part of resident life and student

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The Staff

The Avila Examiner is published bi-weekly during the regular college year with the exception of college vacation periods by Avila College for the general student body, faculty, administration, staff and neighboring communities.

Editor Mary Prigel
Reporters Kevin
Guilfoyle
Jeanne Lillig,
Jeanne Pearson
Photo Pat Whalen
Bill Yager,
Michael Burks
Adviser David
Johnson

All opinions expressed in the Avila Examiner do not necessarily repre-

sent the official position of Avila College. All inquiries or information should be addressed to

Avila Examiner, Marian
Centre, Avila College,
11901 Wornall, Kansas
City, Missouri, 64145.



Socrates Comic Strip Depicts College

by Mary Prigel

College professors may tell students that Socrates died in 399 B.C. Actually that's nonsense. Socrates is alive and laughing at life in a syndicated comic strip.

The strip, which is printed in every issue of the Avila Examiner, is drawn by Phil Cangelosi, a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana who recently settled in Kansas City.

Phil explained that Avila is not the only college where "Socrates" is printed. In fact, college students follow the escapades of characters, such as Dr. Persimmons, in almost 40 universities from South Carolina to Connecticut. Even the University of Alaska prints the strip.

"Certainly, 'Socrates' is printed over a wide geographical area. So, I try to make the strips general," related Phil. "But still, it's hard for me to get a grasp of subjects with which today's college student can identify. Even though, essentially, that is the essence of Socrates: a strip that college kids can relate to and where they can catch a glimpse of themselves."

When "Socrates" first started, Phil was still a college student majoring in advertising. Besides classwork, he was working part-time at an ad agency and helping with the Louisiana State University daily newspaper. Staff members on the daily asked him to begin a comic strip. So, with the help of a friend at the ad agency, "Socrates" was born. Along with LSU, a few other Louisiana universities' newspapers also began printing the strip at the time.

Three years have passed since the first strip. But, during those years, Phil suggested that the growth of "Socrates" has not always been an easy process.

"At one point, I decided

"Socrates" wasn't going anywhere," he said. "So, I decided to stop drawing the strip."

However, as the story continues, "Socrates" was still being printed by some universities and Gary Trudeau creator of "Doonesbury," happened to see it. "He phoned and told me that he liked the strip. In fact, he even suggested a syndicate that I could contact so that the strip could be offered to more newspapers."

After the phone call, Phil decided to continue drawing

"'Doonesbury' is over the heads of many people, in my opinion."

the comic strip. He contacted the syndicate suggested by Trudeau and was turned down. But, once he had made his decision, Phil was not going to be stopped by one rejection.

"I was turned down. That was no big deal. I simply formed my own syndicate," concluded Phil.

So, today "Socrates" is offered through the Creative Arts Syndicate which was formed by Phil.

Obviously one of the turning points of "Socrates" was the word of encouragement Phil received from Gary Trudeau. Phil even

mentioned that Gary had always been his idol. But, according to Phil, "Socrates" and "Doonesbury" have much more in common than the mutual admiration between the two creator's.

"One of my major objectives when I started the strip was to present a simplified 'Doonesbury,'" explained Phil. "'Doonesbury' is over the heads of many people, in my opinion. It is actually a comic strip for intellectuals. But, the majority of the public is basically simple. So through 'Socrates,' I try to entertain them in a simple, yet meaningful way."

Part of entertaining the public, for Phil, involves basing the comic strip upon his own experiences of life. For instance, Dr. Persimmons, a strip character, is based upon one of the favorite LSU psychology professors named Mr. Timmons.

"Basically, I always try to see everyday life in a funny way," Phil explained. "So, drawing 'Socrates' was a natural progression for me. I just took life and condensed it into comic strip form. After all, if I took life too seriously I think I'd go crazy."

However, Phil did do some serious thinking about a recent decision. That is his plan to move Creative Arts Syndicate, a company based in

Continued on page 6

Calendar

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December 9 — Men's Basketball — Avila at Southwest Baptist — 7:30 p.m.
December 9 — Women's Basketball — Avila vs. Baker
December 9 — SUB Movie: "Blazing Saddles" Alt 8 p.m.
December 10 — "Christmas Carol" Goppert Theatre 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Repeat performance on
December 11 at 2 p.m.
December 12 — Second Semester Registration
December 12-17 — Finals Week
December 17 — Men's Basketball — Avila vs. St. Mary's of the Plains — 2 p.m.
December 17 — Women's Basketball — Avila vs. Rockhurst — 7 p.m.
December 17 — Christmas Break Begins After Last Class
January 9-10 — Registration
January 13 — Second Semester Classes Begin

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Giving a Part of Yourself

Christmas: Family, Feasting and Gifts Become Part of Celebration

by Kevin Guilfoyle

Nine Days after the close of the semester, there is a day which is special to many people called Christmas. On this day Christians celebrate the birth of Christ. But different people celebrate the holidays in a variety of ways. Avila students are no exception. They come from many faiths even many lands. Some enjoy the giving and receiving of gifts, some will attend various types of religious services. All seem to enjoy the time that brings family and friends together.

For Avila student Kharlee Kool a junior art major, the

anybody on Christmas. I want to see them because they are happy people on Christmas, with everybody wishing everybody else a "Merry Christmas."

"My family puts up a tree about a week before Christmas. I make things for the tree, usually every year it will be a star, or an angel, or a chair or some sort you can just throw on the tree."

"I like to eat cranberries with the whole cranberry in it. I usually do not eat sweets, but on Christmas cranberries are necessary. We also have turkey on Christmas, with the whole family together."

"You know, I do not get too elaborate with the gifts

has a choir and the whole bit. It is co-celebrated, by two or three different priests saying mass. They bring in trumpets and have a big procession before the mass and the young kids of the school put on the play of the birth of Christ."

"I used to have to shovel snow, but since I went out of town for school my family bought a snow plow. Shoveling snow used to be fun, especially since last year about a ton of snow fell at our house."

"A week and a half before Christmas we will put up the tree. We use an artificial green box tree. When we are through with it we put it back in the attic until next year. We just

of turkey and cranberries, plus all the other traditional things. Like pumpkin pie. We also have wine. We toast to each other's good health."

"Christmas is a funny thing. It is a time when the most suicides take place, for some a time of depression. It is sort of a love-hate relationship. The holidays are nice, but all the brotherhood and the joviality ends after new year. I am going to have a different attitude this year. I used to be afraid and depressed because I knew the holidays were going to end. This year I am just going to take the holidays for what they are worth. I am just going to enjoy myself and when they are over, they are over, I am not going to worry about my friends not being jovial and showing brotherhood. I never had to go home for Christmas before. So it will be kind of special. We have relatives from all over the country coming in plus I get to see all my friends. As dirty as it may seem, with all its pollution, Cleveland Ohio is going to look awfully good right around Christmas time."

Mike Baechle, a freshman business major, celebrates Christmas twice, once at home and once at his grandparents house. He enjoys going to downtown St. Louis to see

I get a kick out of that."

"I enjoy being with my family on Christmas. The excitement of opening gifts and exchanging them. Goofing around on Christmas eve is a lot of fun, watching the snow fall and playing in it. Everybody drinks and we all end up drunk."

"At my grandparents, there will be a lot of people my own age. It is nice to socialize with them and all the other relatives. On Christmas morning we all go watch the St. Louis parade downtown. It is nice to mingle with the people. Seeing all the weirdos, they come out in full swing."

"Everybody helps put up the tree. There are a lot of Christmas carols in the neighborhood. That gets everybody in the Christmas mood. I like to build snowmen. I enjoy playing in the snow and having snowball fights. I also enjoy diving in the snow, wiping out in it. Last year I almost wrecked a wooden post mailbox. My mother puts on Christmas songs that gets everybody going. It is good to see people happy for a change. I also like it because of the long vacations from school. The worst part of Christmas is the cold weather. I would rather sweat than freeze. We get into watching the bowl games over the holidays, makes us forget about



Cars line the plaza streets as sightseers drive through the cascade of lights.

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A Time for Remembering God and

holidays are a time to do nice things for people like making gifts, letting him use his artistic ability. Kharlee enjoys everything that Christmas means to people and how it makes them feel. The only bad thing about it for Kharlee is it falls at a bad time of year. You see, he can not stand the cold weather.

"I think of nice things to do for people," Kharlee said. "I make things for them." "It is more fulfilling for me to make a gift than to buy one." Christmas is a nice time of the year the only thing I do not like about it is the snow being in it. I like looking at snow untouched through the window."

Kharlee further explained, "Christmas is such a happy time of year, so I will make some of the gifts and buy some. People like gifts better if you make them. They seem to keep the things that are made longer than the ones you buy. They have more sentimental value, and they're unique. Try buying something one of a kind from a department store. It can not be done I like to surprise the people with the gifts, the unexpected. It makes me feel warm inside to share those feelings with people you care about. To me that is what Christmas is all about."

"Christmas is a happy time especially since the end of the year is near. I enjoy socializing, too especially at that time of year because everybody I know is in good mood. I like to see everybody. I don't want to miss

I give. I don't want to spoil them. I just give them little simple things and I never give two people the same things, always something different. I just give little objects or knick knacks. One girl I call turkey, well one Christmas I gave her a little turkey and some turkey feathers."

"I like to drink and be merry and get into the Christmas spirit. The main thing that I like about it is, I like people and seeing them happy on Christmas makes me happy." "I really enjoy Christmas but one drawback to it is that some department stores are too commercial, they abuse what Christmas is all about. They just stack up on toys and watch people buy them and then laugh all the way to the bank."

Mick Koch, who is a junior psychology major, celebrates, along with his family, on Christmas eve with the giving of gifts and attending a church service. Mick, like many of us, a last minute shopper, enjoys the snow and he likes to capture the spirit of Christmas with a camera. It is also the time of a new attitude different from the past for Mick.

"My family celebrates Christmas on Christmas eve." Mick said, "Some relatives and neighbors come over and we play card games until 9 or 10 O'clock. That is when we hand out all the gifts. We then will go to a midnight Catholic service at the neighborhood parish. The service

hang Christmas ornaments on it, nothing really special. We hang them high enough so the dog does not get at them."

"We take a lot of pictures at Christmas and we also have taken moving pictures of it. We show the moving pictures to relatives who come in during the year, who could not make it at Christmas time. We show them our Christmas."

"I know it is not good but I am a last millisecond shopper. I go out looking for gifts right before the stores close. I usually end up buying anything just so I can give my family a gift."

"On Christmas day we seem to watch a lot of football on television. We have a big meal

all the city Christmas lights.

"We celebrate Christmas early on Christmas eve at home," Mike said. "Then we go to my grandparents on Christmas day and have a big meal there with all the relatives. The meal is always turkey with all the fixings and cranberries."

"We go to a midnight mass in which the students put on a play of Christ's birth. We put all the gifts under the tree and we open them before we go to mass. On Christmas day at my grandparents, we watch football all day."

"I like to go to big shopping centers and watch the people go crazy, pushing and shoving.

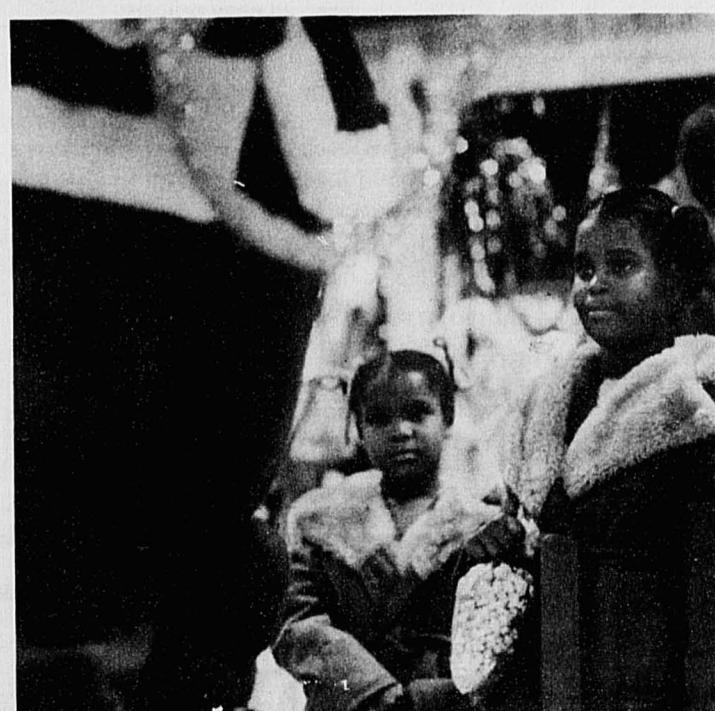
the cold weather. Everybody gets into football.

"We put a big tree upstairs and a little tree down the basement. It livens up both places, we put them in both so one isn't dead. We put all the same ornaments on one tree, so they match with some lights and tinsel. We used to use different kinds but now they are all the same. We hang ornaments from the chandelier in the dining room. We have a little Santa Claus in the house with little trees around him. My mom will do anything to make things look more Christmassy. We usually drink a little eggnog plus anything else that will get you feeling good."

"We enjoy driving downtown, the whole family together, to see all the lights and decorations. They really go all out, especially a Salvation Army tree. It is huge, with all its lights, they try to get you in the Christmas spirit. They have people trying to collect money to reach a certain amount each year."

Ray Mauben, a junior Med. Tech. major celebrating Christmas means a family reunion, all 75 of them.

"Christmas for me is like a family re-union," Ray said. "Everybody gets together and we have a big feast. We roast a whole pig that takes six hours to cook. We also have a variety of other dishes, usually 8 to 10 different dishes. I come from a big family, ap-



Two small girls gaze at the array of Christmas decorations displayed in Ward Parkway Shopping Center.

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Memories Remain of Christmases Past

By Jackie Riggs

Christmas is a time for remembering and pondering over the celebration of past Christmases. So, some Avila students were asked to recount their most memorable 25th of December.

Nancy Seibold, Senior: Pre-med: "I remember it was one Christmas Eve morning. Mom and Dad woke up to a sound they thought was a cat, but it was a baby. We thought it was left for us. It turned out that our neighbor's relatives were visiting and their two year old daughter had wandered off during the night."

Debbie MacInnis, Junior: Medical Technology: "Well, I was about six years old. We were traveling across the country to an Air Force Base in Texas. We spent Christmas in a hotel room and got a little tree and everything. I still don't know how my parents got the presents there, but they did somehow. That's when I got my train set, cowboy boots, Winchester rifle, and my outfit like the 'Lone Ranger'. I saw my first cowboy while we were in Texas, too."

Maureen Lillich, Freshman: Pre-Med: "I remember I got a yellow teddy bear that was bigger than I was. I got on the couch and had to sit on top of it because it was so big; then I fell asleep on it. I must have been four years old. I called him 'Yellow'."

Deedee Buscette, Biology: Visitor at Avila: "It had to be the Christmas in New Hampshire when I was about three years old. We had a big black Labrador retriever then. My mother had just given my brother a big, brand new hockey game. My brother was playing with it and had left it no longer than a minute when the dog went over and promptly christened the hockey game. He was constipated for four days before he went on it."

Ann Whitman, Sophomore, Nursing: "The Christmas I remember most was the Christmas Eve we spent on the road. We left about 7:30 a.m. on Christmas Eve to visit some relatives in Phoenix, Arizona. We stopped at a church along the way, but they didn't have any services. I remember there was even a little snow in New Mexico."

Students Convey Variety Of Christmas Traditions

By Jeanne Pearson

Christmas is the happiest and busiest time of year for millions of Christians in all parts of the world. Many people anxiously await family parties and exchanging gifts. Also, many observe the holiday with religious ceremonies and prayer. However, not everyone celebrates Christmas with turkey dinners and presents from Santa Claus. In fact, some Avila students observe Christmas traditions from the country of their ancestors.

God Jul!
Mary Anderson

In Sweden, twelve days before Christmas the tradition begins with Lucia, a beautiful Christian maiden who lived in Rome. When she refused to give up her religion and marry a pagan, she was burned at the stake. The story of her martyrdom and sainthood was carried back to Scandinavia by the missionaries. Her saint's day is December 13. The ancient custom of presenting Lucia, first in church is now carried out in homes.

December 22 is the day for bringing in the Christmas trees. Our gifts are opened on Christmas Eve. This is also the evening for family reunions. It is at this time not Santa Claus, but the Gnome of Good Luck enters.

house answers, "no" also in a song.

The procession continues until the ninth day in which they arrive upon the doorstep of a house that opens their door and welcomes the procession in for food and dance. Upon entering they kneel at the manger for prayer.

On this ninth evening the journey has ended and the birth takes place, which is celebrated in song.

A half hour before midnight nine Ave Marias are said and everyone sings.

Little children are dressed as shepherds who stand at both sides of the manger. Near by is a table with an image of Christ, the holy pilgrims, and a doll to represent the Infant Jesus. This is passed between the shepherds and put on the manger. Then all kneel and sing it to sleep with the "A La Rorro Nino."

On Christmas eve there is midnight mass at church. Children dressed as shepherds and angels proceed down the aisle. Behind them is the Queen of our Fiesta (fall event) who is Mary and an elected escort, who will be Joseph.

After midnight mass people arrive home for small gatherings. The traditional dishes are a *revolijo*, a dish of prickly

Bono Natale!
Terry Lucci

An Italian Christmas is more of a festival for grownups than for children. Family, friends and relatives gather together on Christmas Eve. Some talk around the fireplace while watching the *appo*, the Christmas log throwing its sparks up the chimney. Then we sit down for dinner, the *cenone*, at which there is no meat (for Christmas Eve is a fast day) but various other dishes prepared in every way imaginable, and *pangiallo* — yellow bread — of corn flour with raisins. For sweet meats, there is *torrone*, a hard candy made of almonds and honey. The meal ends just before twelve when we go to midnight mass.

A kindly old lady called Bifana is in the minds of the children as Christmas draws near, for there is no Santa Claus, nor reindeer.

One Italian custom which our family doesn't practice is that the gifts are not given on Christmas Day but at Epiphany, January 6. Epiphany commemorates the three Magi who came to the manger in Bethlehem bearing presents of

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Rejoicing in His Miracles

Joy George: Sophomore, Nursing: "I remember I was about 11 years old. My sister and I had gone to bed when we heard a big noise outside the room. We looked out the door and saw something really big and round and thought it was a hula hoop. We snuck out and saw two big round things. We decided to go back to bed but didn't fall asleep until 4:00 a.m. We got up about 6:00 a.m. and woke up our parents. After breakfast, we found out the two big round things weren't hula hoops but bicycles! We rode the bikes outside and then it started snowing!"

Sis Reddin, Sophomore: Nursing: "It was the Christmas of 1971. My mother had been ill and in the hospital for six months; she came close to death several times. She returned home on December 23 to be with us. She was convalescing, but thank goodness was on the road to recovery."

Kaye Powers, Senior: Nursing: "I remember I was eight years old and in the third grade. I was an ice skater, and my professional instructor had this skating skirt she was going to give to another girl's mother. The funny thing was that the skirt was supposed to be given to her by Santa Claus. That same year, I received a skating skirt from Santa Claus, too, but I had seen my mom making it. I cried when I found this out, and it took my mom two hours to convince me there was a Santa Claus."

Sue Riggs, Junior: Biology-Chemistry: "I remember Christmases when the whole family was together and everybody had their own place under the Christmas tree for their presents. By the time everybody was finished opening their presents, the living room was full of wrapping paper. Then we all sat down to a Christmas dinner of roast goose, and plum pudding. With Father's famous punch, we wished everyone a 'Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.'"

Marilyn Meissner, Sophomore: Medical Technology-Chemistry: "I remember last year's Christmas the best because it was the first year I was away from home at school. It was so good going home to see everybody again."

Julie Vienhage, Senior, Medical Technology: "The only one I can think of right off hand is the one when we were still pretty young and we went to look at the Christmas decorations around town. We were waiting and waiting in the car for Mom and Dad, and wondering why it was taking them so long to come. We finally went to look at the lights, and when we came back, there were all of our presents under the Christmas tree! Santa Claus had come while we were gone!"

His arms are piled high with more presents, which he leaves on the floor and quickly departs. The packages are opened and then all join hands, circling the tree. These festivities continue until January 13 when Christmas comes to an official end.

Felices Pascuas!
Antonia Lozano

In the Mexican tradition of Christmas, the holiday season begins on December 16 and ends on Christmas Eve. The week before Christmas is called a *posada* or lodging, because it commemorates the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and their nightly search for a place to stay.

Pinatas are the most coveted objects for the *posadas*. At least one is broken every night.

Posadas are never a one family affair. Relatives and friends, all belonging to the church, cooperate by each house holding a party in which adults and children take part.

As soon as it's dark, a procession is formed. The procession takes place out of doors, led by two children carrying a small litter, decorated with pine twigs. Behind the children is a miniature manger on a table which is carried by two people and then several in the procession carrying lighted candles and singing litanies.

After they have finished singing, they stop at a friend's closed door to ask in song for lodging. The man of the

pear, shrimp, rosemary, chile, gold, frankincense and myrrh, and potatoes, bean soup; *Befana* flies through the window with mixed fruit salad with nuts, dow and puts the presents near the manger in a house.

Christmas Celebrations, cont. from page 4

proximately 28 cousins, 75 relatives in all. We all come to one house. We do this three times a year with the biggest one for Christmas. We get together and give gifts for everybody. The house becomes a mess with paper and gift wrap everywhere."

"It is traditional for my family to go to midnight Catholic church services. It is a real big thing. We sing Christmas songs for about an hour. We also go out caroling before



and after Christmas. It's traditional for a group of 3 to 4 kids who grew up together to go caroling."

"I came from a town with a population of about 10,000. It is a closely knit community. Everybody goes out on the streets and celebrates. It is traditional to walk around from house to house to wish people a Merry Christmas."

"I have two sets of grandparents. The mornings of Christmas we spend with one set and we spend the afternoon

with the other set. It is an all day affair. My grandparents always put up two Christmas trees, one for decorations, the other for gifts. The one for gifts is put upstairs in the middle of this big room. On its branches contain envelopes, one for each cousin with money in it from our grandparents. The tree is just plain white with envelopes on it. About three or four o'clock we start looking for the gifts."

"I moved to St. Louis eight years ago. I am originally from San Pablo. I have not been back since we moved to St. Louis. This year will be a special Christmas for my family because my grandparents will be coming to St. Louis to spend the holidays with us for the first time since we left. The only thing different about this Christmas and the ones we used to have is, my 75 relatives won't be here. This time there will be only about 15."

"So with Christmas only a few weeks away, there is not much time left to shop, unless you are like Mick, the last millisecond shopper. A few weeks after Christmas second semester starts. So enjoy the time of year that brings family and friends together and celebrate Christmas your way. Merry Christmas."

A Time for Sharing Thoughts

page 6

H. Paul LeMaire

The Meaning of Christmas

As I was leaving Dolgin's the other day with a couple of boxes of Christmas cards stuck with Dolgin's famous theft-proof tape, I ran into a friend getting out of his car. He saw the Christmas cards and remarked, "Have you noticed how each year there is more snow and less Jesus on these Christmas cards. They should start calling it the Feast of the Snowman instead of Christmas. People aren't very religious any more."

Since there are two topics that seem to embarrass many Americans — sex and religion — I retreated into the refuge of silence. But I did start thinking about what my friend had said. He had a point? snowmen, snowballs and snow scenes seem to be crowding out the manger and "Season's Greetings" seems to be replacing "Merry Christmas. The early Romans and Greeks must have also felt chagrined as Christmas started to replace some of their celebrations. Are people less religious? Are they changing their religion? What's going on?

These are disturbing thoughts to leave the mecca of unnecessary things with. But then I had the brilliant thought that if Jesus is to succeed in melting the eternal snowman, he's got to come across as someone we need. We need snow and snowmen for the kids and to console ourselves over the loss of summer. So what do we need Jesus for? This is the eternal question. Then it occurred to me that we ought to have a religious Mr. Gallup go around and find out what people need, so we can make some sort of connection between Jesus and needs. After all, this is the whole meaning of the Bible — God responding to man's needs.

So as I got to my car, I decided to turn around and walk back to the entrance of Dolgin's and ask a few people what they needed. Screwing up my courage, I asked a man carrying a gigantic box what he needed. "Help in getting this to my car." That shot another ten minutes.

Then I stopped a pleasant looking woman with a couple of kids. She replied, "A humidifier for my dry nose." Hmm, what does that have to do with Jesus? Then I gingerly approached a rather big man with a substantial paunch who looked like a contractor and asked him what he needed. "A new LTD; my Pinto is too small for me."

If these are the needs of people today, no wonder religion has fallen on bad days. As the soldiers used to say, the US is the land of the great PX. Then the thought occurred

to me that Christianity has always hailed Jesus as saviour and saviour has to do with salvation and salvation has had some rather strange meanings. For Moses and his group, it meant a better place to live and more food to eat; for the Jews of the exile, a homeland and a new temple; for the Jews of the time of Jesus, getting rid of the colonizers, the Romans. For the Jews and the Arabs today, peace; and for my substantial friend, a new LTD. Of course, in the past things never turned out exactly as people had expected and they probably won't in the future either.

And maybe that's part of the answer to the meaning of Christmas and the meaning of Jesus: He is the man of eternal surprises and perhaps we should start calling Christmas, the feast of surprises. That would certainly displace the snow. God answers man's needs, but the exciting and disturbing thing is, he always does it in a new way, a way that surprises us. And so perhaps the endless years of manger scenes took away the surprise from Christmas. At least snow has the advantage of always being different!

Jesus preached the kingdom of God and while that's a tough term to deal with, it certainly means something new. So perhaps a new card at a reasonable price next year depicting the man of eternal surprises might melt the snowmen.

Joan Ritty

No Room

The road was flat and straight in sun-struck heat,
Almost before I saw them, we were past,
A hippie couple, thumbing in the street,
With traffic speeding onward much too fast.

The girl was large with child; a child she seemed,
So tired and strained, they must have traveled far,
The boy a long-haired Joseph? thus I dreamed
And wondered, "Is there room in someone's car?"

Why did this girl seem Mary-like to me?
Why did this couple haunt my restless track?
If others like myself began to see,
Did anyone, remembering, go back?

Cartoonist,
continued from page 3
Baton Rouge, Louisiana,
to Kansas City early next year.
Phil expressed one of the
reasons for the change of location.

"I feel that the Baton
Rouge postmark is hurting
'Socrates,' he said. "People

**"Drawing 'Socrates'
was a natural progression
for me."**

tend to characterize other
people and material by the
place from which it comes. A southern postmark
carries a connotation of slow
and backward ways. Whereas,
the name Kansas City has a
good connotation. So, maybe
with a Kansas City postmark
stamped on Socrates material,
newspaper editors will be more
likely to look at the strip
objectively."

Phil, also, has other plans
for "Socrates." He hopes to
offer college newspapers a
choice of getting the strip
one, two, or three times a
week. Also, he plans to mass
solicit other papers.

All in all, Phil has many
plans for "Socrates." And,
only time will tell whether the
strip becomes another comic
classic, like "Peanuts" or
"Blondie." Certainly, Phil
would like "Socrates" to be
remembered. The same goes
for Phil himself.

"After it's all over, I'd like
to be remembered as a man
who had ambitions and hopes.
Someone who had talent and
tried to use it so that people
could find a little pleasure in
life. But, more importantly, I'd
like to be remembered as a
basically nice guy."

Carolyn Stopperan

The Midwife's Story

How well I remember that night. It has been forty years, and the boy, well, the boy is dead. But I must ask that you not tell anyone where you heard the story, because Mary and Joseph are the only other people who know I was there.

I suppose you have heard that the birth took place in a stable. It did indeed. Joseph had tried to find lodging at three inns, but because it was the time of enumeration, there were many people away from home and in need of a place to stay. It was an hour past sunset when the three of us arrived at that last inn. I recall Joseph asking me to wait with Mary while he went to inquire about a room. All afternoon Mary had stiffened with pain and had turned her head so Joseph would not see her grimace. But I had seen her and several times I had held her fragile white hand.

"It will be soon," she had said.

"I know. Joseph will find a place for us and I will be near you," I had replied.

Mary watched as Joseph went to the door of the inn and rapped.

"Look how his shoulders

droop," she whispered. I, too, had noticed how old Joseph appeared. Lines of worry etched his face. The events of the past months had transformed his youthful countenance into that of a man burdened with cares.

We saw the innkeeper open the door. He and Joseph spoke in hushed tones, but Mary and I could not hear them. The man gestured with his hand toward the stable and Joseph nodded. He returned to us. His eyes were filled with sadness and failure.

"There is no room inside. We can rest in the stable."

Mary did not reply. She reached out and touched the bronzed cheek.

He lifted her from her mount. She was heavy with child, and yet he carried her as deftly as he would have carried a babe. There was such gentleness in those strong arms. They spoke no words as he carried her.

I followed them into the stable with some blankets and a skin of wine. The stable had been recently cleaned and was filled with the sweet smell of hay. We put our things down in a corner apart from

cont. on page 8

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More Information To Follow

Travel Awaits Students

By Elizabeth Cress Sweet

Everyone is dreaming of a white Christmas — so why not go all the way and dream of frosty evenings in the Russian Steppes!

Tis' true friends. For only \$699 student and \$750 adult, you can spend Christmas in Russia! From Prague to Leningrad to Moscow, and it's for Avila students!

If that is a bit too far west, how about two weeks in London for less than the normal round-trip economy airfare alone! Reservations are now being accepted for groups of ten or more students for late 1977 and spring, 1978. And there are trips for smaller and larger groups too. More information on the Moscow and London trips are posted on the Theatre Department's bulletin board in Borseline.

Want a credit or two while you travel? Try the Biology Department for a trip to Baja. Or see Sister de La Salle in the Music Department for the New York City trip. You don't need to be a major in either department to qualify and enjoy the offered trips while gaining college credit.

As for myself, I am out to stir up enthusiasm on campus for a mini-course trip to the University of Hawaii at Manoa, so stay tuned to this paper for further developments!

Got your bags packed? Just remember, there's more to being a student than commuting and grades just on campus. A sojourn in London and credit for enjoying Hawaii? Aloha Avila!

Ballet Portrays Nutcracker

A glorious holiday treat for the entire family opened in Kansas City on December 2: an all-new production of Tchaikovsky's beloved classic, "The Nutcracker," being performed at the Lyric Theatre, 11th & Central, Kansas City, Missouri, by the Kansas City Ballet, Missouri's first professional ballet company. Restaged by Eric Hyrst, Artistic Director of the Ballet, and with music by the Kansas City Philharmonic, Maurice Peress, Music Director and Conductor, Frank Collura, conducting, the production will run two more weekends, with evening performances December 9 and 16 at 8:15 p.m., and afternoon performances December 10, 11 and 17 at 2:15 p.m. Tickets may be obtained by writing the Kansas City Ballet, 823 Walnut, Kansas City, Missouri 64106, or by calling 471-7344.

The dazzling new sets and costumes for this production were made possible by a substantial grant from the Hallmark Educational Foundation, as well as the generous contributions of the Enid and Crosby Kemper Foundation, the Kuehn Foundation, the Louetta M. Cowden Foundation, the Parker B. Francis III Foundation, Individual Assurance Company, the L. Russell Kelce Memorial Foundation, and other corporate, foundation and individual donors too numerous to list. The production is further made possible by support from the Missouri Arts Council, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

Addressers Wanted Immediately! Work at home — no experience necessary — excellent pay. Write American Service, 8350 Park Lane, Suite 269, Dallas, Tx. 75231.



(Editorial continued from p. 3)

life programs."

However, Chief Luster refused Tom's request. And, in part of the return letter, Chief Luster responded to the need of a college to create a homelike atmosphere in dormitories.

"While I appreciate the fact that you are creating a home-like atmosphere for the 235 students in your buildings, to use a central community room as a family room constitutes and creates a danger to the individuals in the building."

Obviously, Avila staff members are as concerned about fire precautions as the fire department. After all, I'm sure that they are not seeking a way to burn down Avila. So, special precautions would have to be made if Avila was allowed to have live Christmas trees.

However, for this year at least, students will have to celebrate their Avila Christmas without being surrounded by the aroma of pine.

But perhaps, we, as members of the Avila community, can turn the absence of the traditional live tree into a useful purpose. After all, it is true that Christmas is not a string of colored outside lights, a sprig of mistletoe, or even a beautifully decorated live tree. Christmas remains after all the presents have been given and trees taken down. Because Christmas is the remembering — the knowing deep within each one that its real meaning is the birth of Christ our Savior.

Channukah Celebration Signals Dedication

by Mark Fudenberg

Although Channukah is only listed as a minor holiday on the Jewish calendar, it ranks second to Passover in historical significance to the Jewish people. Channukah is a Hebrew word meaning "dedication;" hence it is known as "Feast of Dedication" or "Feast of Lights." There are actually two themes to Channukah: the historical story and the mystical story.

The historical theme of Channukah dates back to 168 B.C.E. when a small army of Jews led by the Hasmonean priest Mattahias and his son Judah the Macabee, overthrew the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus IV.

On the fifteenth day of the month of Kislev, in the year 168 B.C.E. the Temple in Judea was desecrated by the enemy.

was desecrated by the enemy. A statue of Zeus Olympus was raised on the pedestal behind the Alter of Sacrifice. Many of the Jews in Judea refused to obey the new laws of the conqueror; consequently many were slain, and many fled to the hills.

It was at this time that love for their religion and their

people flamed among the Jews into a passion as they had never experienced before. It led to a course of action which marked the beginning of martyrdom, in which to die al Kiddush ha Shem (to sanctify the name) was valued as the highest of virtues.

The maccabees revolted and swept into Jerusalem, but the Temple lay in ruins. They first smashed the idol of Zeus, cleared the temple of debris, and then the Jews purified the sanctuary.

In commemoration of these events. Judah decreed that, on the same day every year thereafter and until the end of time, the Jews were to celebrate Channukah for eight days.

The other version of Chan-



Padre Humberto Almazan presents a film, "Damien" The film portrays the story of a Catholic priest who worked with lepers. It premiered at Avila on November 15.

Avila Captures Own Classic



Receiving the first place trophy, Avila basketball team members congratulate one another on their victory. Coach Bill Warris accepted the award.

Led by Doug Bing's Most Valuable Player performance and 32 points, the Avila Men's Basketball team held off Missouri Valley, 88-86 in overtime, to win the 1977 Avila Classic. The Championship game was played at Thomas Moore Parish Center on November 29 after being postponed due to weather conditions on the originally scheduled November 26 night.

The opening game of the

Classic matched Tarkio against Missouri Valley with Tarkio being unable to match Missouri Valley's 24 points from Mayo Todd, 19 points from Marvin Holloway, and 18 points by Jim Murphy. Missouri Valley came up on top, 90-74.

The second game paired Avila against Park College. Avila survived the 43 points

of combined scoring by Ray Thompson and Marty Durrusion to handle Park, 101-89. Both teams shot 48% from the field, but Avila managed to put the ball up 8 more times. Doug Bing lead the scoring for Avila with 19 points.

In the game for the third place Trophy, both team's shooting was as cold as the weather outside and each hit only 33% from the floor. Despite Park's 33 turnovers, they came away with a 63-57 win.

The Championship game turned out to be as close as the balloting for the MVP. Missouri Valley led at the half, 34-32, and maintained a 6 to 8 point lead most of the second half, but Bing's 28 second half points helped knot the score at 82-82 in the final minute of regulation play. Mike Dean also played an instrumental part in the overtime. Missouri

Valley had a chance to put the game away but Brian Emgarren missed a free throw with one second left on the clock. Avila outscored the opponent 6 to 4 in overtime to take the Classic Championship, despite the 36 point effort of Missouri Valley's Mayo Todd.

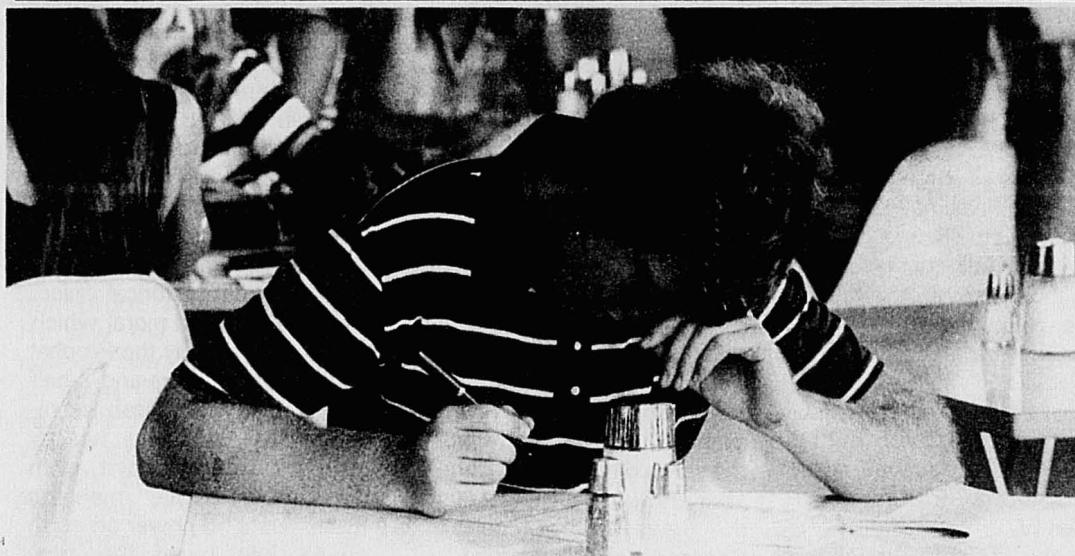
In addition to Doug Bing's selection as Most Valuable Player, Avila placed two other players on the All-Tournament Team. Jim Salanky and Wayne Simien joined Mayo Todd and Marvin Holloway of Missouri Valley and Ray Thompson of Park as All-Tournament Players.

The Avalanche will now go on the road for five games and will not return home until December 17 when they face St. Mary's of the Plains. They hope to start the New Year right by playing their first two games at home on January 11 and 14th.

Re-dedicating Yourself

A Time for Hard Work

page 8



Students Reveal Study Hints

By Kevin Guilfoyle

The fall semester is rapidly coming to an end. With the close comes finals week. A week of final tests that could make or break it as far as grades go. Ten students tell how they prepare themselves for that week. One good thing about it is, that when it's over, a student can go home and relax over the holidays.

Mike Dean, a business major, offered some tips on relaxation and positive thinking.

"A friend gave me a good tip to get down to the Alpha Brain Level," Mike explained. "This is done thru relaxing, take three deep breaths, then tell yourself, if you hold your thumb, forefinger and index fingers together and you read your lesson you will remember it better. You tell yourself you have superior concentration. This is a technique of Silva Mind Control. Since I have taken that course I have a better attitude toward studying and as a result I am studying better. Relaxation helps me retain the information I need to know."

Abu Bundu, a business ma-

jor, believes in preparation.

"I study little by little throughout the semester," said Abu. "I never cram for a test because the classes I have, you have to keep up with. If you fall behind it's tough to get back to where you have to be. I also believe all work and no fun isn't healthy, so I party on weekends and go to school straight during the week. You can't party every night and expect to pass. You have to reserve time for study and for partying. I like studying to background music, not too low, not too high, so it doesn't distract me. Without music there is too much quiet and that gets me tired and I want to go to sleep."

Gerry Radzimski, psychology major, takes care of himself mentally and physically before tests.

"I have to limit my nights out, I need plenty of rest," said Gerry. "I gradually build up my studying, have a review before the test, to rehash it in my memory. As soon as I know what my finals will consist of, I'll start studying. I do not study to music. I need full concentra-

tion. I'll most likely study in the library where nobody can bother me. I'll study for about 45 minutes a day, that should be enough. I go over the material more than once, study with somebody else, maybe they can further explain things. Eat well so you're not sick, you don't want to lower your resistance. In order to retain I like to study right before I go to bed."

Mick Koch, psychology major, echoed Gerry's thoughts.

"Study a little before, instead of cramming," Mick explained. "That's what I like to do but it's not what I always do. I have to have silence, no music. Divide time, certain amount for each class. If you only studied one you tend to forget about your other classes. Get plenty of rest."

Antonia Lozano, art major believes in organization.

"I read the chapters and go over the main parts and highlight the important parts. Antonia said. "I organize my notes to get things straight, and write down and memorize terms and

Finals Philosophy Fails

And it came to pass early in the morning toward the last of the semester, there arose a multitude smiting their books and wailing. And there was much weeping and gnashing of teeth, for they had left undone those things that they ought to have done, and they had done those things that they ought not to have done, and there was no help for it.

And there were many abiding in the dorm who had kept watch over their books all night, but it availeth nothing. But some there were who arose peacefully for they had prepared themselves the way and made straight the paths of knowledge. And these wise ones were known as burners of the midnight oil, and by others they were called curve raisers.

And the multitude arose and ate a hearty breakfast and they came into the appointed place, and their hearts were heavy within them. And they had come to pass, but some to pass out.

And some of them repented of their riotous living and bemoaned their fate, but they had not a prayer, and at the last hour there came among them one known as the instructor, she of the diabolical smile, and passed papers among them and went her way.

And many and varied were the answers which were given, for some of her teachings had fallen among fertile minds, others had fallen among the fallows, while still others had fallen flat. And some there were who wrote for an hour, others for two, but some turned away sorrowful; and many of these offered a little bull in hopes of pacifying the instructor, for these were the ones who had not a prayer.

And when they had finished, they gathered up their belongings and went their ways quietly, each in her own direction, and each vowing to herself in this manner:

"I shall not pass this way again."

definitions. That helps me a lot."

Another psychology major studies when her mind is relaxed so she can fully grasp what she needs to know.

"I study when I feel like it. It doesn't matter what time day or night. I like quiet when I read, so it will all go in. And, I like music when I have to write. It puts life into what I'm writing," said J.P. "I study in intervals, studying one subject then switching to another. I write out definitions and key words. Write notes out several times until I know it. I contact the teachers if I don't understand something, also I go over material with somebody else and start studying in class by memorizing terms in notes."

Janet Smith, med. tech, major is into preparation.

"I study everyday for two hours in complete quiet, said Janet. "I re-copy notes usually do it in studies in dorm. I use the library for researching theories."

Wayne Simien, business major, also believes in preparation.

"I start early, studying a little at a time. It's hard to cram all the information in one night," Wayne said. "I have to have quiet. I lose concentration listening to music, because I want to get up and start dancing to it. We have to thoroughly apply what we need to know, it takes a lot of time studying. I get a lot of sleep before a test and I study at least three hours a day."

Ray Mauben and Kharlee' Kool take quite a different route when studying. They are into cramming.

"I study two days before final exam," explained Ray. "The day before I relax and get drunk to relax my mind. The morning of the test I go over everything so it will be fresh. The only bad thing about cramming is that you forget everything in 2 days after the test. I listen to music to get me going when studying, then I turn it off and really concentrate. If I'm tired I start exercising."

Karlee' Kool is quite a different individual, he enjoys the pressure of cramming.

"I like to cram for tests. I enjoy the pressure, I work better under pressure. Two days before I'll look at it but the night before I'll cram. I've been here 3 years, I can handle the pressure. It builds up, but I handle things as they come. I take notes in classes. I read them 2 or 3 times the night before to understand everything. I usually get B's. Midsemester was a little shaky but they will all come out B's. I enjoy school socially, I party a lot, after I party I come in to study, not too many people can do that. I am a junior so that proves something has been going right."

So, unless you are one of those unique individuals like Kharlee' who can get by with partying and cramming, it would be a good idea to heed the advice of the others, prepare yourself, mentally and physically, after all, before you know it we will be dreaming of a white Christmas.



Midwife's Story, cont. from page 6

the animals. Joseph found a rake and made a mound of hay for each of us. I laid a blanket on each mound. Joseph poured some wine for us and I broke the bread which a servant had brought from the inn. That was our supper. We retired soon after we had eaten, for we were weary from the day's journey.

"I am close by if you need me," Mary did not answer me, for she was already asleep.

We could not have been asleep more than an hour when I heard her moan.

"Water," she said. Joseph was at her side in an instant. I pulled my shawl about me, for the night was cool. I, too, knelt by her side.

"The pain comes often now," she said. I placed my hand on her and I could feel the rhythm beneath my palm.

"Joseph," I said, "her time is near. Please gather more blankets." he gathered those from our pallets and went to the inn to ask for more.

"Will you need help?" he asked.

"No, I can attend her myself," I said.

Mary rested between the

pains.

"I am afraid to bear this child," she said. "I am a plain woman and I cannot understand what has happened." Her voice trailed off and I knew she was praying.

Joseph and I waited with her. When her pains came I could sense that he suffered with her. He held her hand throughout the night.

At last the head crowned and into the world was born a lovely baby. His hair was black and his skin was olive.

"He is beautiful," I said to Mary.

"Let me see him."

I cut the cord and cleaned him while Joseph held fast to her hand. We had brought some small cloths with us, and I swaddled him and placed him between Mary and Joseph. They did not speak but gazed on the babe who slept peacefully between them. I closed my eyes and must have drifted off to sleep. I was awakened by the crying of the infant. Mary put him to her breast.

"It is nearly morning," Joseph said to me. He and

I walked to the stable door

and out into the silent barnyard. The inn was still, the sun was barely visible on the horizon.

"The day will be fair," he said.

"It is only fitting for the birthday of your son."

His thoughts returned to the birth and he said, "I have seen a miracle."

Little did we know that we had witnessed a miracle far beyond that of the birth of Joseph's son.

That night is still vivid to me. I have grown into an old woman, and I do not pretend to know the whole meaning of that night or of the events that followed. I helped at many births, but none other gave me such reverence for life. Some say that night was brighter than any they had ever seen. That I cannot say for the labor lasted the night, and I was in the stable with Mary. There is no more to tell. I must go now for I am weary.

Peace be with you.